

Who Is Most Concerned About Mobile Privacy?

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App users worry about how their personal information is used

Apps have become a major factor in mobile users'™ concern about their privacy and the safety of their personal information, and research from the Pew Internet & American Life Project shows that older users, along with the more affluent and educated, are most likely to avoid apps that give them pause.

Among US mobile phone owners who used apps, 54% said they had decided not to install an app because they were worried about how it might use their personal info. Users ages 30 and older were more likely than average to have done so, as were higher-income users and college graduates.

App users were much less likely to report uninstalling an app they already had because of their personal data concerns, with just three in 10 having done so overall. Age was less of a factor here, and only the lowest-income group surveyed reported doing this far above the average rate. Men were also significantly more likely than women to have done so.

Geographical info is just one aspect of the personal info apps use that gives people pause, and one way to avoid giving location away is to turn off the location-tracking features on smartphones.

Young people were most likely to have taken this step, with 32% of 25- to 34-year-olds saying they had, along with 22% of 18- to 24-year-olds and one-quarter of 35- to 44-year-olds. The oldest users were significantly less likely to use this function.

Pew did not ask these respondents whether turning off location-tracking features assuaged their fears about "other people or companies being able to access that information," but even with location services turned off, carriers can still pinpoint the location of phones, and are known to share that information with government entities" sometimes without a warrant.

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